

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HAMBUR 00136 021453Z

41

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL HAMBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3675

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUESSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

LIMITED OFFICIAL HAMBURG 0136

E.O.11652: N/A

STAGS: PINT GW

SUBJECT: PARTYSTRATEGY FOR THE ELECTION OF THE NEW MINISTER-
PRESIDENT IN LOWER SAXONY

REF: HAMBURG 0106

1. WITH LESS THAN THIRTY-SIX HOURS TO GO BEFORE MINISTER-
PRESIDENT-ELECT ERNST ALBRECHT MAY, IF HE CHOOSES TO DO
SO, PRESENT A CABINET LIST TO THE LANDTAG FOR APPROVAL,
THE POLITICALSITUATION IN LOWER SAXONY IS TEETERING ON SO
MANY UNDERTERMINED AND UNREVEALED FACTORS THAT THE OUTCOME
IS LIKELY TO BE "A TOSS OF THE COIN" ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG
WAGNER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE HANNOVERSCHE ALLGEMEINE
ZEITUNG, AND ONE OF THE STATE'S MOST PERCEPTIVE POLITICAL
OBSERVERS. WAGNER INFORMED US IN HANNOVER LAST WEEK THAT
REPORTING ON THIS CAMPAIGN AND TRYING TO ANALYZE ITS
DENOUEMENT HAS BEEN THE MOST DIFFICULT POLITICAL TASK
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PAGE 02 HAMBUR 00136 021453Z

THE HAZ HAS FACED IN TWENTY YEARS.

2. ALTHOUGH THE CDU HAS IMPLIED ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS, SINCE THE ELECTION OF ALBRECHT ON JANUARY 15, THAT ALBRECHT WOULD PRESENT HIS CABINET CHOICES TO THE LANDTAG FOR APPROVAL PRIOR TO THE EXPIRATION OF HIS MANDATE AT MIDNIGHT ON FEBRUARY 3, ALBRECHT HAS YET TO DO SO. ON JANUARY 27, WILFRIED HASSELMANN, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CDU IN LOWER SAXONY, TOLD US THAT ALBRECHT INTENDS TO WAIT UNTIL THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT BEFORE MAKING A FINAL DECISION, HOPING, IN THE MEANTIME, THAT ONE OF THE SPD/FDP COALITION DEPUTIES WHO ABSTAINED OR VOTED FOR ALBRECHT ON JANUARY 15 MIGHT IDENTIFY HIMSELF AND THROW HIS SUPPORT PERMANENTLY TO THE CDU. SUCH A CONVERSION WOULD ASSURE ALBRECHT THE NECESSARY SUPPORT HE NEEDS TO WIN AT LEAST PLURALITY SUPPORT FOR HIS CABINET AND THE CONSEQUENT FORMATION OF A CDU GOVERNMENT IN HANNOVER.

3. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THIS IS BRQE BUT EMPTY RHETORIC AND NOTHING MORE. WE FURTHER BELIEVE THAT ALBRECHT WILL ALLOW HIS MANDATE AS MINISTER-PRESIDENT TO EXPIRE AT MIDNIGHT ON FEBRUARY 3 RATHER THAN RUN THE RISK OF HAVING HIS CABINET LIST REJECTED BY A CHASTENED REGROUPING OF THE 78 MEMBER SPD/FDP COALITION MAJORITY OF ONE OVER THE 77 MEMBER CDU FRACTION IN THE LANDTAG. HASSELMANN CONCEDES THAT THIS TOO IS POSSIBILITY AND THAT ALBRECHT MIGHT, AT THE LAST MOMENT, PRUDENTLY ALLOW TIME TO RUN OUT ON HIS THREE-WEEK MANDATE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT WITH THE PLURALITY SUPPORT OF THE LANDTAG. SINCE ANY VOTE ON AL ALBRECHT CABINET ON OR BEFORE MIDNIGHT TOMORROW NIGHT WOULD BE BY AN OPEN SHOW OF HANDS, WE DO NOT THINK THAT THOSE SPD OR FDP DISSIDENT DEPUTIES WHO SABOTAGED THE KASIMIER ELECTION ON JANUARY 15 WOULD BE WILLING TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES IN A PUBLIC VOTE WHEN THE STATE CONSTITUTION ALLOWS THEM ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO THROW THEIR SUPPORT TO THE CDU SECRETLY IN A FUTURE RUN-OFF ELECTION BETWEEN KARL RAVENS, THE FEDERAL MINISTER OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, CONSTRUCTION AND URBAN PLANNING IN THE BONN COALITION GOVERNMENT, AND ALBRECHT IF, AS WE BELIEVE, THE CDU SHOULD EITHER DECLINE TO SUBMIT A CABINET LIST FOR LANDTAG SUPPORT WITHIN THE NEXT THIRTY-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 HAMBUR 00136 021453Z

SIX HOURS OR, HAVING DONE SO, FAILS TO RECEIVE PLURALITY SUPPORT FOR IT.

4. ACCORDING TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION, THE NEXT STEP WOULD BE FOR THE PRESIDENT OF THE LANDTAG, WITHIN FOURTEEN DAYS, TO CALL FOR AN IMMEDIATE DISSOLUTION OF THE STATE LEGISLATURE. THIS, ALL THREE PARTIES WOULD OPPOSE PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE IT WOULD MEAN A NEW STATE ELECTION AND THE

PROBABILITY THAT MANY OF THE PRESENT INCUMBENTS IN THE
LANDTAG WOULD NOT BE RETURNED TO OFFICE.

5. THE FAILURE OF MAJORITY VOTE TO DISSOLVE THE
LANDTAG WOULD BRING US TO THE FINAL STEP IN THIS COMPLI-
CATED POLITICAL SCENARIO. A RUN-OFF ELECTION WOULD THEN
BE CALLED BETWEEN RAVENS AND ALBRECHT BY SECRET BALLOT
WITH THE WINNER REQUIRED TO RECEIVE ONLY A PLURALITY
SUPPORT OF THE LANDTAG. THIS WOULD BE THE "TOSS OF
THE COIN". MOST WELL INFORMED OBSERVERS INCLUDING
WAGNER AND MAYOR HANS-ULRICH KOOSE OF HAMBURG BELIEVE
THAT RAVENS COULD WIN THIS ELECTION. WE DO NOT THINK
SO. IF THE ELECTORIAL PROCESS GOES THIS FAR WE BELIEVE THAT,
ONCE AGAIN, THOSE DISSIDENT COALITION DEPUTIES, AND
PERHAPS OTHERS, WHO VOTED BEFORE FOR ALBRECHT, WOULD DO
SO AGAIN THEREBY CARRYING THE DAY FOR A CDU MINORITY
GOVERNMENT BY A PHOTO-FINISH. BROGAN

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